

Understanding Chord Progressions

Ted Greene – 1973-11-11

Part 1 – “Baroque”

A thorough grasp of Baroque (“time of Bach”) harmony will form a rock-solid foundation upon which to add the more modern devices in harmony. There actually is not that much to contend with in this field since the harmonic vocabulary associated with this type of sound is limited to triads, 7ths, and occasional 9ths. The main principles are:

- 1) An emphasis on the “outer voices” with a special emphasis on the bass line.
- 2) The recurrence of certain root progressions (numerical formulas) that must be memorized.

All examples will be given in the key of A only, but should be learned in all keys as soon as possible; also in all minor keys. Also experiment and make up variations of the given examples using the same devices but in different voicings. Watch the flow of the outer voices. Try and grasp the significance of each exercise as there is at least one main harmonic device in each. The root progressions (like I IV V I) should be memorized in the first 8 examples, at least. Play these exercises backwards also.

[Blue = editorial additions]

1 A D E A | A D E A | A D

2 E A A D A E A | A D A

3 E A or A A D E A D

4 A D

5 D E A A D E E7 A

6 A F#m D E A 7 A F#m Bm E A

7 A F#m Bm E A

8 A D E A | A D E A | A D

9 E A or A A D E A D

10 A D

11 A D E A | A D E A | A D

12 A D E A | A D E A | A D

13 A D E A | A D E A | A D

14 A D E A | A D E A | A D

15 A D E A | A D E A | A D

16 A D E A | A D E A | A D

17 A D E A | A D E A | A D

18 A D E A | A D E A | A D

19 A D E A | A D E A | A D

20 A D E A | A D E A | A D

21 A D E A | A D E A | A D

22 A D E A | A D E A | A D

23 A D E A | A D E A | A D

24 A D E A | A D E A | A D

25 A D E A | A D E A | A D

26 A D E A | A D E A | A D

27 A D E A | A D E A | A D

28 A D E A | A D E A | A D

29 A D E A | A D E A | A D

30 A D E A | A D E A | A D

31 A D E A | A D E A | A D

32 A D E A | A D E A | A D

33 A D E A | A D E A | A D

34 A D E A | A D E A | A D

35 A D E A | A D E A | A D

36 A D E A | A D E A | A D

37 A D E A | A D E A | A D

38 A D E A | A D E A | A D

39 A D E A | A D E A | A D

40 A D E A | A D E A | A D

41 A D E A | A D E A | A D

42 A D E A | A D E A | A D

43 A D E A | A D E A | A D

44 A D E A | A D E A | A D

45 A D E A | A D E A | A D

46 A D E A | A D E A | A D

47 A D E A | A D E A | A D

48 A D E A | A D E A | A D

49 A D E A | A D E A | A D

50 A D E A | A D E A | A D

51 A D E A | A D E A | A D

52 A D E A | A D E A | A D

53 A D E A | A D E A | A D

54 A D E A | A D E A | A D

55 A D E A | A D E A | A D

56 A D E A | A D E A | A D

57 A D E A | A D E A | A D

58 A D E A | A D E A | A D

59 A D E A | A D E A | A D

60 A D E A | A D E A | A D

61 A D E A | A D E A | A D

62 A D E A | A D E A | A D

63 A D E A | A D E A | A D

64 A D E A | A D E A | A D

65 A D E A | A D E A | A D

66 A D E A | A D E A | A D

67 A D E A | A D E A | A D

68 A D E A | A D E A | A D

69 A D E A | A D E A | A D

70 A D E A | A D E A | A D

71 A D E A | A D E A | A D

72 A D E A | A D E A | A D

73 A D E A | A D E A | A D

74 A D E A | A D E A | A D

75 A D E A | A D E A | A D

76 A D E A | A D E A | A D

77 A D E A | A D E A | A D

78 A D E A | A D E A | A D

79 A D E A | A D E A | A D

80 A D E A | A D E A | A D

81 A D E A | A D E A | A D

82 A D E A | A D E A | A D

83 A D E A | A D E A | A D

84 A D E A | A D E A | A D

85 A D E A | A D E A | A D

86 A D E A | A D E A | A D

87 A D E A | A D E A | A D

88 A D E A | A D E A | A D

89 A D E A | A D E A | A D

90 A D E A | A D E A | A D

91 A D E A | A D E A | A D

92 A D E A | A D E A | A D

93 A D E A | A D E A | A D

94 A D E A | A D E A | A D

95 A D E A | A D E A | A D

96 A D E A | A D E A | A D

97 A D E A | A D E A | A D

98 A D E A | A D E A | A D

99 A D E A | A D E A | A D

100 A D E A | A D E A | A D

10

Diagram 10 shows a sequence of guitar fretboard diagrams for a chromatic scale. The sequence starts with a 5th fret A (I), followed by a 4th fret C#m (iii), a 5th fret D (IV), a 7th fret A (I), a 5th fret E (V), a 2nd fret E (V), a 3rd fret D (IV), and a 2nd fret A (I). The diagrams are connected by a line, indicating a continuous scale. The final two diagrams are empty 5-fret grids.

11

12

A E F#m C#m D A G#° (E7) A

12 9 9 6 7 6 5

I V vi iii IV I vii° I

Do backwards also

13

A AΔ7 F#m7 A D AΔ7 Bm E7 F#m

10 10 9 10 7 7 7 7 9

I I vi7 I IV I ii V7 vi

SEQUENCES

A sequence is the repetition of an idea at a different pitch level. By far, the most popular sequences in classical harmony (and modern as well) involve root progressions of 4ths (5ths). Notice the numerical formulas.

14

A 10 I	D 12 IV	G#° 9 vii°	C#m 11 iii	F#m 7 vi	Bm 9 ii	E 5 V	 	 	
A 7 I	D 3 IV	G#° 6 vii°	C#m 6 iii	F#m 9 vi	Bm 4 ii	E 7 V	etc.		

Finish these sequences:

15

A 10 I	D 10 IV	G#° 9 vii°	C#m 9 iii	F#m vi	Bm ii	E V	A I	 	
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16

A 12 I	D 10 IV	G#° 11 vii°	C#m 9 iii	F#m vi	Bm ii	E V	A I	 	
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17

A 12 I	D 10 IV	G#° 11 vii°	C#m 4 iii	F#m vi	Bm ii	E V	A I	 	
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18

AΔ7 12 I	DΔ7 10 IV	G#m7 11 vii	C#m7 9 iii	F#m7 vi	Bm7 ii	E7 V	AΔ7 I	 	
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A sequence need not start on I:

19

$F\sharp m7$	$Bm7$	$E7$	$A\Delta7$	$D\Delta7$	$G\sharp m7$	$C\sharp m7$	$F\sharp m7$		
vi	ii	V	I	IV	vii	iii	vi		

Delaying and/or sustaining chordal tones adds to the richness of chord progressions:

20

$A\Delta7$	$D\Delta7$	$G\sharp m7$	$C\sharp m7$	$F\sharp m7$	$Bm7$	$E7$	$A\Delta7$		
I	IV	vii	iii	vi	ii	V	I		

21

$F\sharp m7$	$Bm7$	$E7$	$A\Delta7$	$D\Delta7$	$G\sharp m7$	$C\sharp m7$	$F\sharp m7$		
vi	ii	V	I	IV	vii	iii	vi		

Descending 3rds

22

A	$F\sharp m$	D	$G\sharp^o$	E	$C\sharp m$	$F\sharp m$	D	Bm	E
I	vi	IV	vii°	V	iii	vi	IV	ii	V
$C\sharp m$	A	D	Bm	$G\sharp^o$	$C\sharp m$	A	$F\sharp m$	Bm	$G\sharp^o$
iii	I	IV	ii	vii°	iii	I	vi	ii	vii°
E	A								
V	I								

23

A	DΔ7	G\sharp^o	C\sharpm7	F\sharpm	Bm7	E	AΔ7	D	G\sharp^o7
I	IV	vii ^o	iii	vi	ii	V	I	IV	vii ^o 7

C\sharpm	F\sharpm7	Bm	E7	A					
iii	vi	ii	V	I					

Try to impart motion in all exercises if possible. Compare the next two examples to appreciate the extra beauty of moving lines.

24

AΔ7	DΔ7	G\sharp^o7	C\sharpm7	F\sharpm7	Bm7	E7	AΔ7	DΔ7	G\sharp^o7
I	IV	vii ^o 7	iii	vi	ii	V	I	IV	vii ^o 7

C\sharpm7	F\sharpm7	Bm7	E7	AΔ7					
iii	vi	ii	V	I					

24a

AΔ7	DΔ7	G\sharp^o7	C\sharpm7	F\sharpm7	Bm7	E7	AΔ7	DΔ7	G\sharp^o7
I	IV	vii ^o 7	iii	vi	ii	V	I	IV	vii ^o 7

C\sharpm7	F\sharpm7	Bm7	E7	AΔ7					
iii	vi	ii	V	I					

25

A Δ 7	D Δ 7	G \sharp o7	C \sharp m7	F \sharp m7	Bm7	E7	A Δ 7	D Δ 7	G \sharp o7
10	12	9	11	7	9	5	7	3	6
I	IV	vii \flat 7	iii	vi	ii	V	I	IV	vii \flat 7
C \sharp m7	F \sharp m7	Bm7	E7	A					
2	4	4	7	5					
iii	vi	ii	V	I					

26

A Δ 7	D Δ 7	G \sharp o7	C \sharp m7	F \sharp m7	Bm7	E7	A Δ 7	D Δ 7	G \sharp o7
10	10	9	9	7	7	5	5	3	4
I	IV	vii \flat 7	iii	vi	ii	V	I	IV	vii \flat 7
C \sharp m7	F \sharp m7	Bm7	E7	A					
2	2	4	5	5					
iii	vi	ii	V	I					

27

A7	D	G \sharp o7	C \sharp m	F \sharp m7	Bm	E7	A	D Δ 7	G \sharp o
10	7	9	6	7	4	5	2	7	6
I	IV	vii \flat 7	iii	vi	ii	V	I	IV	vii \flat o
C \sharp m7	F \sharp m7	Bm7	E7	A					
6	4	4	2	2					
iii	vi	ii	V	I					

28

A	A Δ 7	D	G \sharp o	G \sharp o7	C \sharp m	F \sharp m	F \sharp m7	Bm	E
5	7	7	4	6	9	2	4	7	2
I	I	IV	vii \flat o	vii \flat 7	iii	vi	vi	ii	V
E7	A								
2	5								
V	I								

Go back and convert all sequences into a form of triple rhythm now (like 3/4, 6/8, 9/8, etc.)

Here is one in 9/8. *White notes are numbered in terms of their chronological appearance. Some notes are part of a chord and then hit again later, which accounts for the symbol:...* [These numbers and symbols have been changed to Ted's standard "playing order" symbols. – Editor's note.]

29

vi ii V I IV vii^{ø7} iii vi ii V

I IV vii^{ø7} III 7 vi

Try sequences with little triads too. Here is another type of sequence:

30

IV vii^{ø7} V I vi ii vii^{ø7} iii

etc.

Sequence of 5ths

31

iii vii^ø ii vi I V

etc.

32

iii vii^ø ii vi I V vii^ø IV vi iii

Sequence of 2nds

33

iii ii ii I I vii^ø vii^ø vi

etc.

Also elision ascending sequence of 5ths: in scherzo rhythm

G#^ø D Bm F#m D A etc.

Understanding Chord Progressions

Ted Greene – 1973-11-11

Part 2 – Contemporary, Pop, Rock, Country, Folk, etc.

Just as a study of Bach will provide the necessary insight into the harmonic language of the Baroque period, the study of the songs of the Beatles will open up the door to the abovementioned categories, because the Beatles fused many different elements into their music.

The progressions given should be learned in all keys. Look for patterns that constantly reappear; also notice unusual features when they appear.

Compare with Baroque harmony.

1) **All My Loving**

ii | V | I | vi | IV | ii | bVII | V | ii | V | I | vi | ii or IV | V | I | I :|| vi | III(+) | I | vi | III(+) | I :||

2) **And I Love Her**

ii | vi | ii | vi | ii | vi | IV | V | I | I :|| vi | V | vi | iii | vi | iii | IV or V | V :||

3) **Can't Buy Me Love**

I7 | I7 | I7 | I7 | IV7 | IV7 | I7 | I7 | V7 | IV7 | V7 IV7 | I7 :|| iii | vi | IV7 V7 | I | iii | vi | ii or IV | V :||

4) **Eight Days a Week**

I | II | IV | I | I | II | IV | I | vi | ii or IV | vi | II | I | II | IV | I :|| V | V | vi | vi | II | II | IV | V :||

5) **Fool on the Hill**

I | ii | I | ii | ii V | I vi | ii V | i bVI i | iv | bVII | i iv i | I :||

Beats: / / // / / //

6) **Hard Day's Night**

I IV7 | I | bVII | I | I IV7 | I | bVII | I | IV | V | I IV7 | I V :|| I | iii | vi | iii | iii | I | vi | II | V :||

7) **Help**

I | I | iii | iii | vi | vi | IV bVII | I :|| ii | ii | ii | ii | bVII | bVII | bVII | bVII | V | V | V | V | I | I | I :||

(break for riff)

8) **Here, There and Everywhere**

Intro - rubato (no tempo): I iii bIII ii V $\overline{\text{I}}$ // / /
||: I ii | iii IV | I ii | iii IV | vii III | vii III | vi II | i V :|| ii ii V | I vi | ii (or vii^ø7) III | vi | ii (or vii^ø7) V :||
of bIII -----

9) **In My Life**

I V | I7 | IV iv | I | I V | I7 | IV iv | I | vi | IV | bVII | IV I | vi | II | iv | I :||

10) **Let It Be**

I | V | vi | IV | I | V | IV iii ii | I :|| vi | iii or V | IV | I | I | V | IV iii ii | I :||

// / /

// / /

11) **Norwegian Wood**

I | I | I bVII | I :|| i | i | IV | IV | i | i | ii | V :||

- 12) **Penny Lane**

$$I \text{ vi} | \text{ii} V | I \text{ vi} | i7 | \text{vi}^{\emptyset} 7 | \flat VI^{\Delta} 7 | \text{ii} V | \overset{\text{1}}{\text{ii} V} :|| \text{ii} V | I | \text{iii} | IV | IV | I | \text{iii} | IV | V :||$$
of $\flat VII$ ----- of original I
- 13) **Eleanor Rigby**

$$\flat VI | \flat VI | i | i :|| :: i | i | i | \flat VI | \flat VI i :|| i7 | im6 | \flat VI | i | i7 | im6 | \flat VI | i |$$
- 14) **Michelle**

$$I | iv | \flat VII | \flat VI 7 | V II 7 | V :|| i | i | \flat III 7 | \flat VI | V i | iv V | i im^{\Delta} 7 | i7 im6 | \flat VI \text{ or } iv | V :||$$
- 15) **Something**

$$I | I^{\Delta} 7 | I 7 | IV | II | V | \text{vi} vim^{\Delta} 7 | \text{vi} 7 II | IV \flat III V | \overset{\text{1}}{I} :|| :: VI | I I^{\Delta} 7 | \text{vi} I | \overset{\text{1}}{IV} \flat VII IV | I :|| \overset{\text{2}}{IV} \flat VII | I :||$$

// / /
of VI ----- // / /
original I
Repeat to
beginning
- 16) **She's Leaving Home** (6/8 time)

$$I v | ii | vi | II | ii | V | ii | V :|| I | I | I | I | I | \flat VII | vi | II 7 | vi | II 7 :||$$
- 17) **With a Little Help from My Friends**

$$I V | ii | IV V | I || :: \flat VII IV | I :|| \overset{\text{1}}{V} :|| vi | II | I \flat VII | IV :||$$
to beginning
-- repeat twice --
- 18) **Yesterday**

$$I | vii III 7 | vi | IV V | IV I | vi II | IV I :|| :: vii III 7 | vi IV | ii V | I :||$$
to beginning

Understanding Chord Progressions (Part I - "BAROQUE")

A thorough grasp of BAROQUE ("time of Bach") harmony will form a rock-solid foundation upon which to add the more modern devices in harmony. There actually is not that much to contend with in this field since the harmonic vocabulary associated with this type of sound is limited to triads, 7ths, and occasional 9ths. The main principles are:

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- ② The recurrence of certain root progressions that must be memorized.

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main harmonic device in each, the root progressions (like I-IV-V-I) should be memorized in the 1st 8 examples at least.

into open E first, then F#

hold - do not pick again.

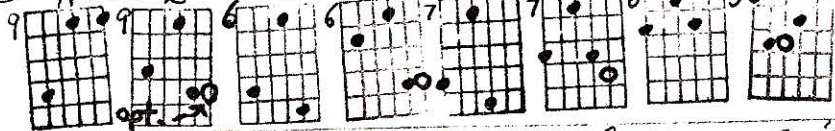
etc.

PLAY THESE EXERCISES BACKWARDS ALSO

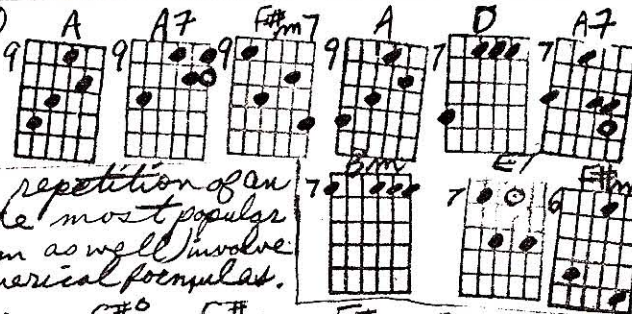
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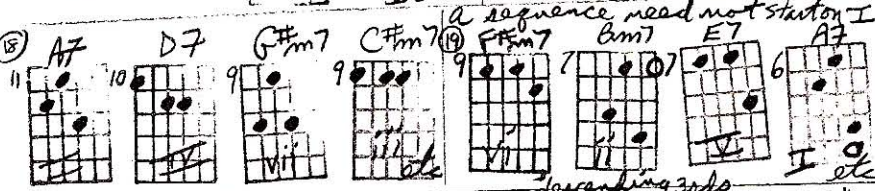
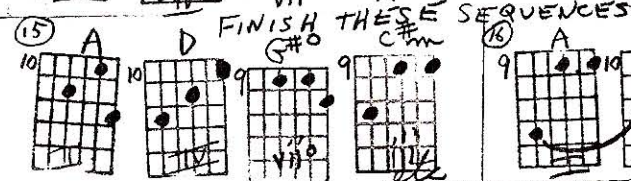
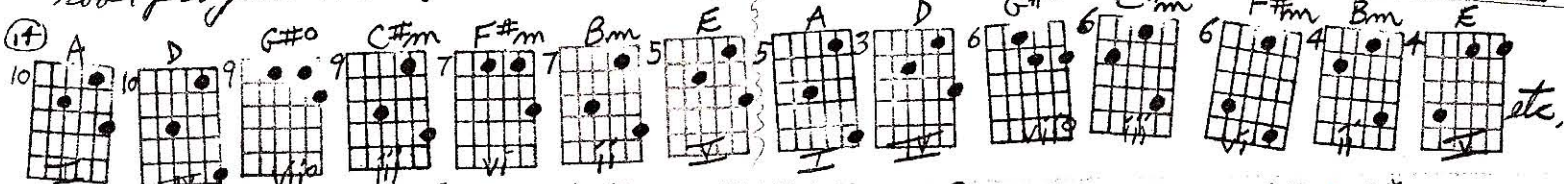
(12) do backwards
also E



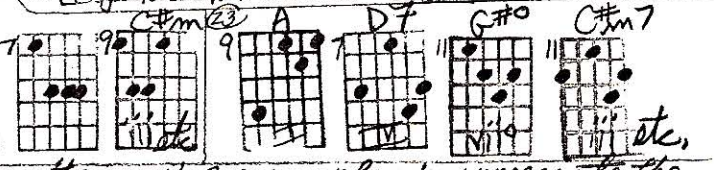
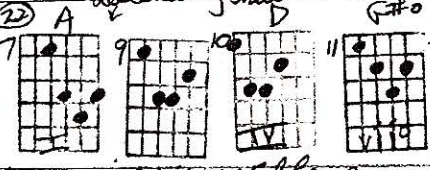
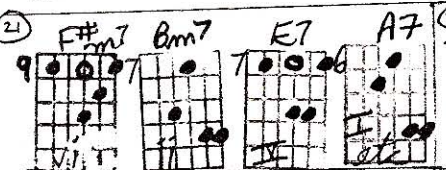
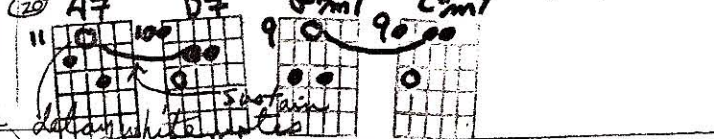
(13)



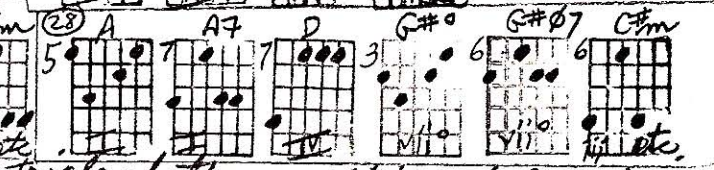
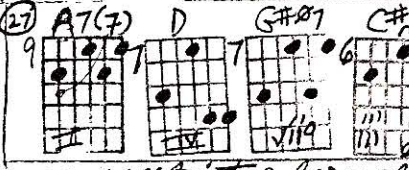
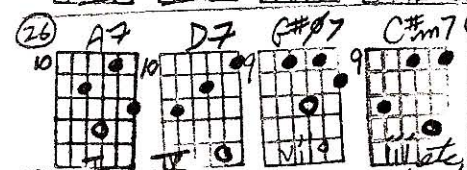
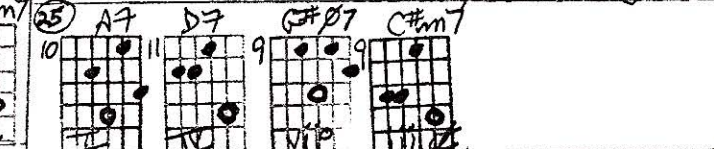
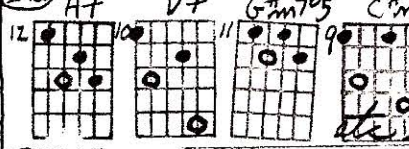
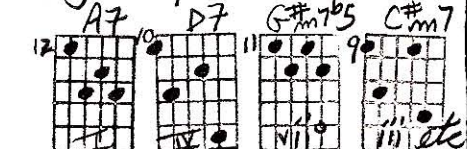
SEQUENCES - A sequence is the repetition of an idea at a different pitch level. By far, the most popular sequences in classical harmony (and modern as well) involve root progressions of 4ths (5ths). Notice the numerical formulas.



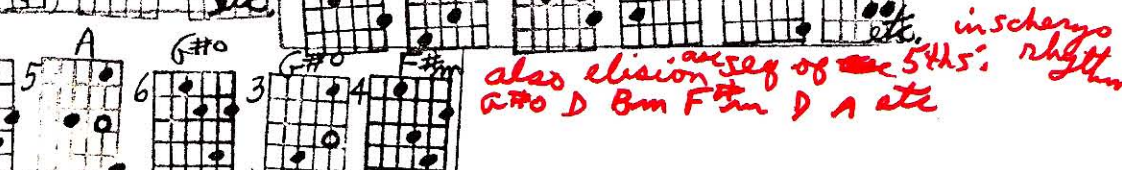
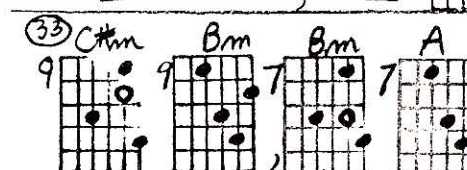
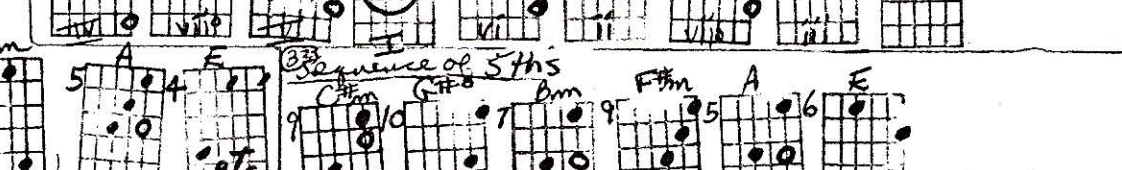
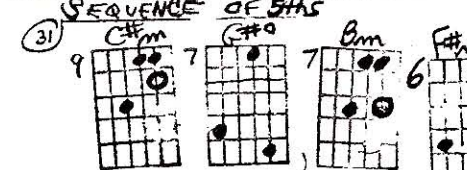
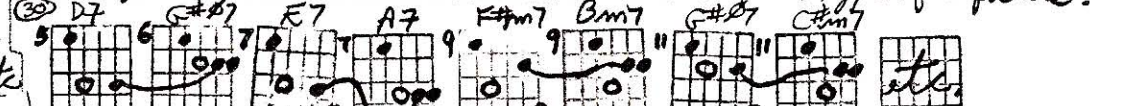
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Try to impart motion to all exercises if possible. Compare the next 2 examples to appreciate the extra beauty of moving lines.



go back and convert all sequences into a form of triple rhythm now like 3/4, 9/8, 9/8 etc. Here is one in 6/8 - white notes are numbered in terms of their chronological appearance. Some notes are part of a chord and then hit again later, which accounts for the symbol.



Sequence of 2nds, in schenker also elision of seq of 5ths: rhytm G#o D Bm F#m D A etc

